

An Open Letter  
to my Fellow-members of  
The Theosophical Society

LETTER NO. 9

MAY 24th, 1939

DEAR BRETHREN,

I propose to take advantage of this letter in order to lay stress on the importance of the youth of our Society to fit themselves to *carry on*, to use Bishop Leadbeater's last words, the great traditions which, through the selfless loyalty of preceding generations, are so much alive today.

We of the older generation are, I hope, doing our best. We are carrying on. But one by one, few by few, many by many, we drop out and cease to be at the helm of the Masters' work, so far as the physical plane is concerned.

Who and where are the selfless and devoted younger people to come after us? In the past each period has had its very fine younger workers, first to work with the older people and afterwards to take their place. It was so in the case of

H. P. B. and of Colonel Olcott. So was it, too, in the case of Dr. Besant. It must be the same with us.

I do not hesitate to say to the older generation that it would be a terrible error for us to try to fit these young people to follow in *our* footsteps, to carry on *our* orthodoxies, to repeat our own particular methods of carrying on. We do not want young people to be like us. We want them to be different from us, to minister to the needs of their generation, as, I hope, we have been ministering to the needs of ours. Out of the great traditions they must fashion both life and forms for the blessing of the generation to which they belong.

We must help our younger brethren to discover their own fine Selves, to enter again into their own fine pathways of service and sacrifice, so that they may be true to themselves and to the generation which they are appointed to help. We older people may not know what the new world really needs. However much we may be able to help, still are we in some measure remnants of the old world, and we shall have to be born again on the physical plane before the new world shall

be ours as it is already the heritage of the young.

In the spirit of the greatness which knows no distinction of time, but belongs to all time, our young successors must feel the call to give themselves utterly to the service of Theosophy and The Theosophical Society as these may need expression in the new-young age.

There are tremendous ideals and tremendous certainties which we must help in every possible way our young people to realize for themselves. They must be afire with *their* Theosophy and with *their* deep understanding of the purpose of membership of The Theosophical Society. Truly, they must have time to equip themselves in the best possible way for the dedication which is at their disposal. But just as so many of us subordinated our own individual futures to the service of Theosophy and The Theosophical Society, subordinating our lives even in youth to the great purpose of which we were conscious, so must the young people of to-day fashion their careers in terms of the majesties of their opportunities and live greatly, purposefully as they lay the foundations of their after-lives.

I do not hesitate to say that most of our young members have for many lives before fought in the great fight to which they are called in this life. They are but girding on their armour once more. They are but once again seizing the swords of their righteousness. Our part is not to tell them what to believe, what to think, what to say, or what to do. It is for us to help them to remember for what in the old days they put on their armour and seized their swords. No greater blessing can we confer upon our younger brethren than that they shall remember at least in spirit the causes for which they have fought life after life, and for which in more lives than one they suffered and died. Let them but have this memory, however vaguely, and they will be irresistibly moved to fashion a finer armour than ever they have worn before and finer swords wherewith to direct the powers of Love and Justice.

It is not for us older people to sit in judgment upon the young. It is not for us to say to them that they ought to do this, or that, or the other. It is indeed our business to protect them against the hazards of their inexperience. It is indeed our duty, up to a certain point, to strengthen them

with our own experience. But never at the expense of their true freedom, since it is not for us to judge as to the nature of the service for the fulfilment of which they have been born after us. To each generation its due service, and let not one generation interfere with the service of another.

There are some Theosophists who have a sense of possession over their children and who even impertinently presume to dedicate them from birth to the Masters, to Theosophy, to The Theosophical Society. And these foolish people, in their heart of hearts, are hoping that their sons and daughters will copy them. And then comes the desire to surround the young people with the Theosophy of the parents, and to erect round them barriers of orthodoxy, of conventionality, from which they must sooner or later escape, often never again in this life to be able to draw near either to Theosophy or to The Theosophical Society without a shudder. We must not impose upon our young people our own certainties, however dear and true these certainties may appear to us. We must not impose upon them that attendance at meetings which may mean so much to us.



We must not demand that they shall be members of the Golden Chain, the Lotus Circles, the Round Table, and any other movement which we may think so suitable for young people. Well and good if we can make these movements so attractive that the young people delight in participating in them. But we must avoid even the faintest suggestion of coercion, or of being sad if our young people do not do that which we should like them to do. Our work as older Theosophists is to make Theosophy so compellingly attractive, intriguing, wonderful, that little by little our younger people feel for themselves that indeed is there nothing else worth living for. We must lead such lives as show how marvellous is the influence of Theosophy and of membership of The Theosophical Society. We must try to be so fine that younger people, desiring to have an equal fineness, trace it to its source, and therefore join The Theosophical Society and become devotees of Theosophy. Preaching may have its value. But living is the order of the day.

A general difficulty with most Theosophical parents is either that they cause their children to draw too near to

Theosophy or that they give them no opportunity to draw anywhere near at all. I know many parents whose children have never had a single opportunity to come near to Theosophy or to the activities of The Theosophical Society. This is indeed very damning to the parent who, having access to Theosophy, does not offer access to his child. Let the child receive or reject, but let him at least have the opportunity. On the other hand there are parents who drown their children in Theosophy and in all that it means to them. The result is that while in the earlier years the children have no other course but to accept the inevitable, later on Theosophy and The Theosophical Society repel them ; and quite naturally too.

We must be ourselves to our children, so that they may become themselves to themselves. There is every reason that we should reveal to them all those things which to us are most splendid—our belief, it may be, in the Masters, our joy in the thought of reincarnation, our peace in the conception of karma, our reverent wonder towards the picture of the evolutionary process, as disclosed to us by Theosophy, our refuge in our certainty as to the inevitability of

victory. We are indeed well advised to share with our successors the mighty motives behind any good we may be able to do and any happiness we may be able to have. We may indeed hope that some of these motives may be theirs, knowing as we do what such motives have meant to us. But what is even more wonderful than the most wonderful conviction any one of us may have is that each individual has, as his glorious birthright, his own compelling and wonderful motives to move him ever onwards and upwards on the pathway of evolution. If we look round us upon the world, we must try to see that each individual is growing on his own way just as we are growing on ours. We may feel that our splendours are greater than his. But very likely he is feeling that his splendours are greater than ours. We may feel that he needs our splendours. He may feel that we need his. The truth probably is that we need each other's. But God forbid that we should imagine that splendour belongs to us alone, that we have a monopoly in it, so that only as others enter into our splendours can they know Truth and move rapidly towards the goal. This is the error, the grave error, of all missionaries, and of all those who conceive



in any way that they have a corner in Truth. Perhaps it is good at a certain stage of evolution that people should be fanatic and proudly proselytizing, but the Theosophist should have passed this stage, and should, while cherishing ardently his own truths, be busy in helping others to discover theirs rather than to seek entry for his into them.

Theosophy unfolds as the world grows, and while it may be true that in, for example, *The Secret Doctrine* Madame Blavatsky enunciated a system of the Science of Life that is true for all time, the fact still remains not only that the system was only partially, very partially unfolded, but also that as the years pass, it will be seen increasingly truly. Also, membership of The Theosophical Society may not be to future members as it is to us or as it was to our predecessors. *Tempora mutantur nos et mutamus in illis*. "The times change, and we change in them." The world grows, and everything changes in that growth. We do not want the Theosophy of tomorrow to repeat the forms of today any more than we of today should be repeating the forms of yesterday, or of the day before. The Life? Ah, that is another matter! Life is

eternal but forms are fleeting. But we must be very carefully on our guard to avoid any identification of the Life with the forms, or the dangerous imagination that what we think is the life is necessarily the Life. It may be, and very often is, but a thought-form of our own. I feel sure that the deep student of Theosophy and of The Theosophical Society will be able to perceive the Life of these two great gifts the of Masters as distinguished from the forms in which from time to time these gifts take shape. But I am no less clear that it is only the deep student who can avoid the danger of confusing the Eternal Life with the fleeting forms.

I do not think that we should want to *give* to any young Theosophist that which we had or that which our predecessors had. But we should try to give him access to that which we have, as well as to that which our predecessors had. It is one thing to try to give. It is another thing to try to give access. In the former case we tend to impose. In the latter case there is freedom. There is nothing more important for the growth of an individual than he be free at all times to accept or to reject everything that unfolds itself before him.

And it is especially important that this freedom should be able to be exercised in the case of his contacts with individuals. So many of us have that peculiar pride of ignorance that makes us think that not only are we right for ourselves, but also right for others no less. This is one of the great illusions of ignorance, and every wise Theosophist will guard against it at every turn. Just as we have today to try to give to the world, as it is, what the world now needs, and just as our predecessors had to try to give to the world, as it was, what the world then needed, so must we make every effort to help our successors to discover what the world is going to need, so that when the time comes, they may give it just as the world needs it.

Thank God that neither in Theosophy nor in The Theosophical Society is there one single orthodoxy or dogma, although there are so many people who would fain establish them. Truly, individuals are entitled to have whatever dogmas and orthodoxies they like. Some have Blavatsky orthodoxies and dogmas. Some have Besant orthodoxies and dogmas. But The Society has none, and there are none to be

found in the great Science of Theosophy. Each Theosophist must seek freely and find freely. He must seek as his soul directs, and he must find as his soul needs.

It is not for any of us to say to a young person, or to anyone for the matter of fact, "You know you ought to do this, that or the other." Then we assume karma for them. If I say to a young man or woman, "Give up everything for the sake of the Master's work," then I am responsible both for that person's physical well-being and for what he does or does not do. The urge must ever come from the individual himself.

Above all else our young people should have in them a spirit of complete, happy, and delighted surrender to that which to them is most true. They have come from their various heavens in which have been brilliantly afire their own eternal Truths. Descending into incarnation, they necessarily lose more and more touch with the spirit of the heavens they have left—mainly owing, of course, to the crass ignorance which prevails, due to the so-called knowledge doled out to the young through the futile systems of education

that are used. Our business, as people comparatively experienced, in this outer world, is to help these young people to regain touch with their heavens by seeking as freely as possible for the Truth that is theirs.

I believe that Theosophy is a composite heaven and that membership of The Theosophical Society is self-consciousness in it. So believing, I feel that we must present this composite heaven to the youth of the world, and especially to our own youth, that in it they may seek their individual heavens. I also believe we should do all we can to make the path that leads to membership of The Theosophical Society as straight and as easy to them as possible. So will Self-consciousness arise more quickly in them.

But there must never be persuasion, still less coercion. I have continually to harp upon this note, since it is so vital for the rapid growth of The Theosophical Society and for the quick unfoldment to the world of the Truths of Theosophy.

There is little doubt that in every decade from 1875 to the present year of grace there have been generations of Theosophists so equipped and inspired. Young



people have been available, who have grown into the stalwarts of their maturity. Are we of the present older generation seeing to it that the stalwarts of tomorrow are growing out of the youth of today? If not, then I fear that we older people are gravely to blame. What, then, have we left undone that we have not been an inspiration to the younger generation? It is very easy to say that the younger people of today are of lesser calibre than the young people of our yesterdays. Personally, I do not believe this to be true. Nor would I say that the older generation of today are of lesser calibre than those of our yesterdays. The times are very difficult and full of strain. In some ways, perhaps, it is more difficult to live rightly in these times than in some others. But all the more reason for us to be careful not to remain satisfied with our own Theosophy and with our Theosophical Society as it is. We must serve both better that both may be able to help more the world as it is now. But we must remember the future, and equip to the very best of our ability young people to be wise, radiant, and enthusiastic trustees when their time comes to hold in their hands the gifts that the Masters first placed in the hands of

H. P. Blavatsky and of Colonel H. S. Olcott.

Wherever you can, you must draw our young people into our work. Wherever you can, you must associate them with you in the guiding of your Section and your Lodge and your various activities. You must gradually bring them forward first as your assistants, then as your colleagues, and finally to replace you.

Very likely you will find the work changing its course, modifying its nature, as a result of this association. So much the better. Young people who are members of a Lodge should feel that they are valued in the Lodge, however much their point of view may be different from that of the majority of the older members. They must feel that they have force to use and that they have the opportunity to use it.

Of course, you must help them with your appreciation, your suggestions, your unfailing encouragement, your protection, and where necessary your tactful intervention. And all the while by helping the young, you will be renewing your own youth, so that when the time comes, you will be the

readier to become young again in body and in all the characteristics of those constant re-creations which at long last end in Youth Eternal.

As I grow older and gradually loosen hold on the physical plane, as we are so rightly enjoined to do in the *Shastras*, I have been thinking I must try to gather around me, as each of us of the older generation must try to gather around himself, a few young people who will be inspired by me, whom I may fire and stimulate for the service of The Theosophical Society, a few who may be helped not perhaps necessarily to the Light but to be steadfast in the Light. If we only have one, that is something, in fact it is quite enough. I would say to every older person in our Society, even from the youngest-old person: You should be an inspiration to youth. You may leave any amount of legacy in money but it cannot equal the legacy of your own personal example. And neither of these can equal a legacy in the person of young people.

If we cannot do this, there is something the matter with us, we are static. The older we grow, the more interesting we should become to the younger generation.

I challenge you all, as I challenge myself : Are you interesting to youth ? Do young people like to gather around you ? Or do you feel that young people have not as fine a record of service as you yourself have ? As I have intimated, if they have not, it is at least partly our fault.

We have a large number of young people in our Society for whom we older people are very responsible. We must not fail them any more than our elders failed us. We are set in loyalty and in the spirit of service, sacrifice, and impersonality. But why ? Because our elders helped us. I do not think there is a single older member who can fail to say : " If I am, as strong as I 'am it is because of some older people who set me a shining example. My gratitude to those who enabled me to be what I am must be expressed in helping others to be what they must be."

If you have any relatives—sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, cousins, grandchildren, Young Theosophists friends—you have a duty to them. When I sometimes feel that there is not perhaps in the younger generation quite that *élan vital* [spring of vitality], that sparkling

vitality which is so essential, that vividness, that eagerness, if I feel a certain lethargy, a heaviness, indifference, a certain desire to constrict himself within the narrow area of ordinary activities, I challenge myself as to what extent we older people are to blame. Do we take sufficient interest in the younger generation, do we help them, do we draw near to them, give them what we are and what we have, and let them make whatever use of it they can ?

These young people are coming after us. Some young person is going to be the President of The Theosophical Society. Some young person in due course is going to be the Vice-President. A few are going to be members of the Executive Committee. Many young people are going to be General Secretaries and Presidents of Lodges. All the leaders of the Theosophical Society will come from today's youth. On the one hand we shall be so delighted and thankful if we can give to our Society a fine band of young people to carry on ; or if we cannot, we shall look with not a little shame on the fact we did not do all we could to bring the young people to bear with a sense of tremendous loyalty their responsibilities as we have been educated



by our older brethren to bear our responsibilities.

Think of the tremendous opportunities in a school like the Besant Theosophical School, or the Olcott Memorial School in another degree. Everyone of the students in the Besant Theosophical School to the very best of my belief is guided there. It is the only school in India where the Masters' influence directly prevails.

Do you remember how Dr. Besant said when *New India* was about to disappear that the Theosophists in India ought never to have allowed it to disappear, as it was the only newspaper in India consciously seeking to fulfil the will of the Hierarchy, a priceless asset for India. Even Indian Theosophists failed to support and to sacrifice to their uttermost for it, and she writes pathetically about that. It was one of the many blows with which we Theosophists have hit Dr. Besant, and in a very pregnant passage she brings out the fact that it was the only newspaper conducted by a recognized and senior agent of the Hierarchy, the only newspaper consciously reflecting the Plan. We have nothing of that sort nowadays.

Some of our older people have surely failed in the past. We must now see that in these moments of crisis we do not fail our younger generation, that we make everything safe. I think every single member of The Theosophical Society ought almost to be over-working for the sake of the safety of Theosophy and of the safety of The Theosophical Society, and especially to prepare the younger generation and in particular those immediately around him, to shoulder the responsibilities that ought to be theirs in due course.

The whole question divides itself into two: Are we able to give the inspiration? Are they able to receive it? If they are able to receive it, they will burst through their shackles and bonds and shatter their limitations, and we shall let loose the gates through which shall pour the spirit, not the form, the spirit of our own devotion, the spirit of our own utter loyalty to Theosophy and The Theosophical Society.

So far as the younger generation is concerned, what is wanted today is Theosophy applied in action. But to apply it, it must be known. How many of our young people know anything at all about Theosophy and its

principles as expressed in our classic literature? How many know what The Theosophical Society has done? How many have read *Old Diary Leaves* and have been happily, gloriously stimulated, steeped in the great traditions of The Theosophical Society? How many today know anything about the astral or the mental planes and what goes on there? How many know anything about the Masters' Plan? So far as we older people are concerned, I think I can say that we do know Theosophy, we have studied it. But the average older member has not made any experiments, he has not been a pioneer in Theosophy, he has not found *his own* Theosophy, but the Theosophy of C.W.L., A.B., H.P.B., and so on. He has yet to find a different Theosophy, though he probably knows the orthodoxies of Theosophy. Let our young friends know the orthodoxies so as to be able to pass on to the heterodoxies. You cannot be a heretic before you are an orthodoxist.

In these days with the world in the situation in which it is, with India in her present situation, the spirit, not the form, of Theosophy and The Theosophical Society is immensely vital. We must apply

that spirit of Brotherhood to every situation. For example, in India there is the tremendous danger of antagonism between Muslims and Hindus. We must stimulate in the great Hindu majority that willingness to make concessions to the minority. Dr. Besant's principle was that the majority should always make sacrifices. We have, as a Section of The Theosophical Society in India today, to draw these two great communities together. We have no greater work than that. If every Indian Lodge put that in the forefront of its programme, it would be far more important than "What is Consciousness?", "Who is God?" "God is Love," etc. etc. We can read these things in books, but we must put the great needs of today before the Indian world with the strength not only of the Lodge itself but with the Masters' blessing on the Lodge for so doing. We should exercise a tremendous influence. The more Lodges composed of Hindus, the greater is their opportunity to preach the gospel of Brotherhood as between these two great races who have been brought together by the Elder Brethren for the sake of a great purpose.

I make no apologies for speaking to Indian Lodges in this general letter to all

Lodges, for the problem of India is the problem of the world, and each Section may rightly substitute its name for India, and its vital problem for India's vital problem.

It is well to have a World Federation of Young Theosophists within The Theosophical Society. It is well that they should study their problems in their own way, in their own freedom, and in their own youthful autonomy. It is well that youth should be able to work by itself from time to time and to face the world in its own way. As did Dr. Besant, so do I most heartily support the Young Theosophist Movement within our ranks. But we must never forget that there is but one Theosophical Society, one Theosophical Movement, and that the young and the old must contribute to it their respective types of strength and fervour. From the standpoint of the Real, there is no youth, there is no age, there are only flames, and whether the flames be the flames of age, or of youth, they are ever Fire, and together they form one great Fire of Evolution, consuming earth that it may reach heaven. Young and old in The Theosophical Society must work in beautiful



comradeship, each helping the other, each standing shoulder to shoulder with the other—both together for the great Cause. The old are no less worthy than the young and the young are no less worthy than the old.

Without youth, no life ; without age, no experience.

Without youth, no enthusiasm : without age, no peace.

Without youth, no challenge ; without age, no achievement.

Without youth, the picture of Theosophy is without its glorious colours ; without age the picture of Theosophy is without its splendid message.

Without youth, The Theosophical Society is without its molten fieryness ; without age, The Theosophical Society is without its mighty rocks and mountains.

Youth and age together—differently !

Georges S. Arundale

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